

Henri de la Blanchère

MEMORIES OF A SPARROW



Translator: Nicolae Sfetcu

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I. THE HOSPITALITY OF A MARABOU STORK

*No path of flowers leads to glory,
I only want Hercules and his works to be a witness.
(La Fontaine.)*

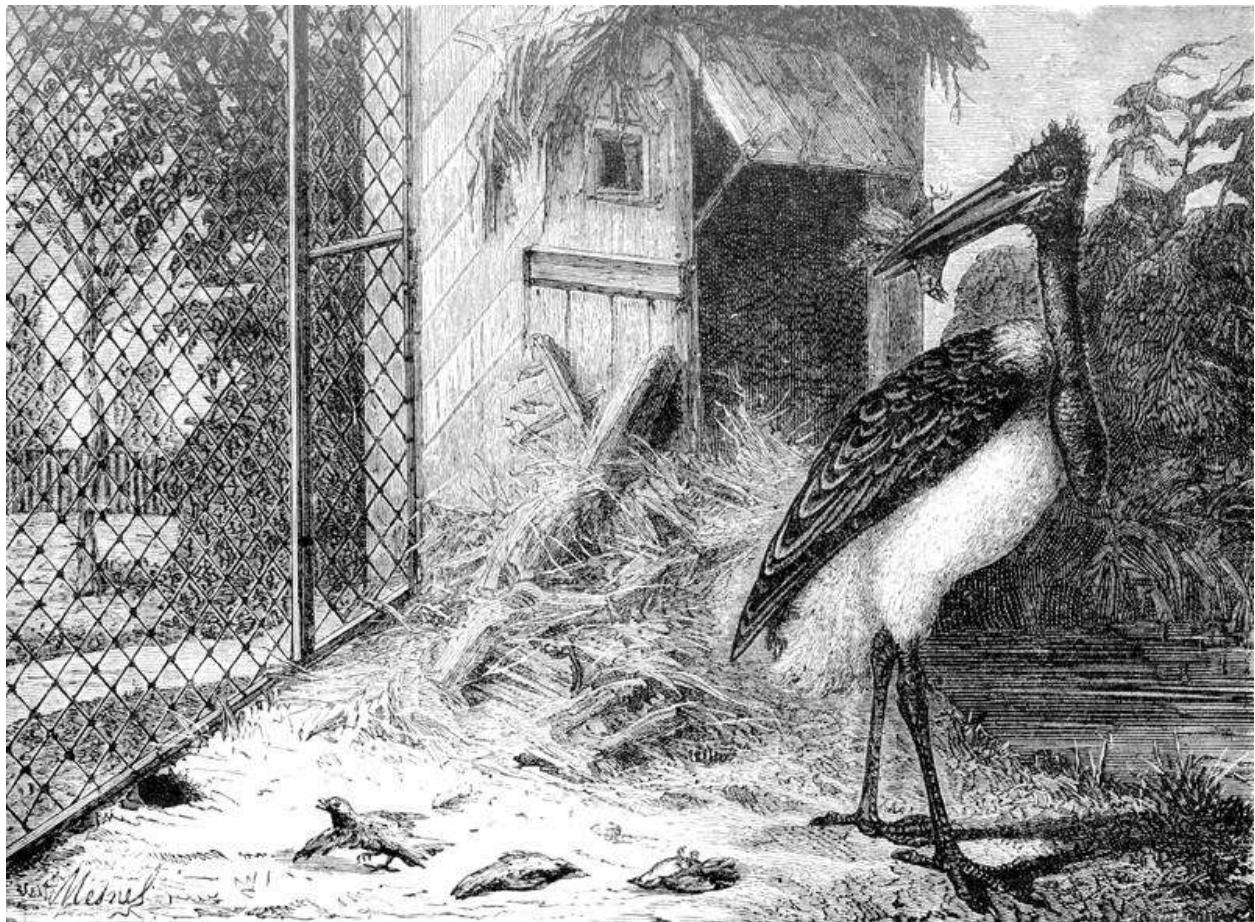
The first event I remembered was a terrible cataclysm that deprived me of all of my family at once and made me a poor orphan.

I was born in the acclimation garden of the Bois de Boulogne. My mother had made a choice, to build her nest, of the thatched roof covering the house of a huge, but frightful bird called Marabou. It is the one to which the women of men tear these charming white feathers like a light snow that they plant on the head. It is not I, dear mistress, who will

ever engage you to adorn you with this strange ornament! Ah! if you knew where are collected, these feathers so light!!!

Carpet under the crossed thatch, we lived in the greatest abundance; the mash of the foreign birds assembled in this garden provided my father and my tender mother with an inexhaustible mine to feed us, and the prudent sparrow woman had chosen the house of Marabou because of the proximity of the water, which allowed her to find easily at the edge the worms that we urgently need during our young age, especially at the time of growth of our feathers. My nesting companions were two brothers and two sisters, and our parents waited only a few days to show us the use of our wings. Alas! this is easier said than done!

One night, the wind rose under the pressure of the storm. Carpet in the bottom of our nest, under the wings of our parents, we trembled with repeated lightning flashes and under the hot gusts that shook the house on its foundations. Faint with fear, wet with torrents of water coming through the straws and dripping on our nest, we pressed against each other without even daring to cry.



The hideous Marabou had swallowed my father, my mother, my brothers, and my sisters.

At last the sun appears, but weak, and veiled; the wind is redoubled by force, and suddenly a great movement is made in our dwelling; the storm hurls the roof down, and we are all scattered on the ground at the feet of the Marabou.

My father lay crushed under the pressure of a beam, my poor mother was only beating a wing: her dedication had preserved us, and all five, panting, shivering, wet, we were lying on the muddy ground, pushing weak cries of terror. In less time than I start writing it, horror!!! the hideous Marabou had swallowed my father, my mother, my brothers, and my sisters!

A little further from the monster, I fell against the separation in wire which limited this yard of the neighbor where lived bustards. At the moment when, with the grave step which an executioner driven by fate would take, the Marabou was advancing towards me, opening his immense beak, I saw a hole in the earth near me. To rush into it was the business of a wink, and the peck that was destined for me met with nothing but emptiness. Furious, the foul animal redoubled, with a terrible blow, on the hole in which I had taken refuge. But I was advancing slowly along my underground, and the Marabou's picking only had the effect of closing me all the way there, by throwing the lands behind me.

Where was I? ... I gathered my ideas for a moment, then I decided to push forward. Soon a slight glimmer appeared in front of me, and I emerged from the earth in front of Father Bustard, who looked at me with a very intrigued look. I was saved! This underground was a passage gallery dug by rats to pass from one courtyard to another.

I shudder again when I think of the danger, I ran that day, both above and below the ground.

The worthy bird, to whom the chance had made me come, would not do me any harm; he looked at me disdainfully, turned on his heel, and took no further care of me. I took advantage of it to take refuge in the middle of a tuft of grass, and there I tried to dry myself a little and warm my numb members.

Soon the hunger, the cruel hunger was felt. I called; but who to call? I was alone in the world. Ah! my dear readers, complain with all your kind heart of the fate of the orphaned child! - I called from time to time ... out of habit, because I felt my strength go away ... I understood that I were going to die.

Fortunately, sparrows sometimes give to the men a show of which more than one of them could make a profit. While I felt myself perish, a conciliabule stood above my head, between the branches of the little oaks, then all the sparrows present, young and old, came down to me and came to bring me the peck. Thank you to their charity! Thank you for the good words they came to tell me and by which they raised my courage. The younger ones were so eager to do their benevolent work that they came to my rescue even in the presence of a large group of walkers raised against the barrier. The old, more cunning, more experienced, waited until we were alone to come down to bring their help and advice. It lasted three days and three nights during which, hoisted on a kind of box which was in the courtyard, I slept very peacefully, having by my side two solid sparrows which

warmed me and served me as bodyguards. On the fourth day, I felt no pain from my bruises; I had only the immense sorrow of the loss of all mine, and on the south, under the rays of a beautiful sun, I could take my flight and go, on the neighboring trees, to thank my saviors.

I even pushed the love of vengeance to fly over the Marabou with the intention of sitting on his bald head to peck him; but his formidable beak inspired me a so salutary terror that I renounced my project and contented myself with dropping something of which he did not only notice!

What to do? What to become?

I could have remained in the midst of the numerous tribe of my fellows who live in the garden; but the too recent memory of the catastrophe to which I had escaped pursued me, and made me hate a place where a poor sparrow could not even safely nest and raise his family.

Perhaps one cannot escape one's destiny. No doubt the taste of travel that filled my whole life was growing in me and ended up bringing me to happiness, to rest, near my friend.



In the wheat.

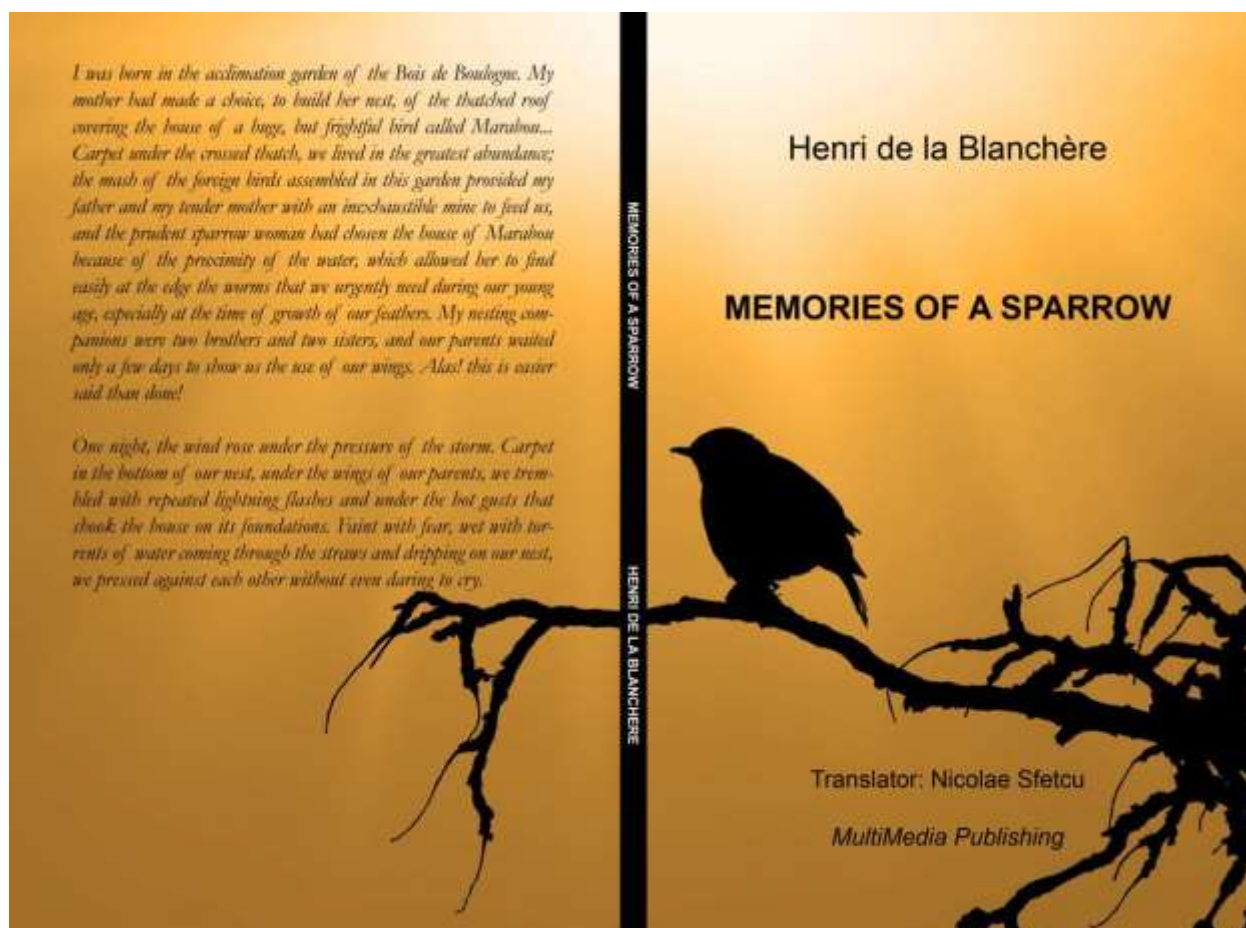
I resolved to leave. No sooner said than done! The next morning, the rising sun found me already in full wood, following an alley towards the waterfall. From there I reached the

rating field, passed over the Seine, and reached St. Cloud. From this stage, I no longer know, by name, any of the places where events pushed me; I have only one word in my head and my heart: that of *Bon-Repos* (*Good-Rest*). This way is called the castle of Claire's father, a castle that would be perfect, if there were a few less owls in the park, - *Bon-Repos*, the blessed place where I want to die on the lap of my friend!

Book

"I was born in the acclimation garden of the Bois de Boulogne. My mother had made a choice, to build her nest, of the thatched roof covering the house of a huge, but frightful bird called Marabou... Carpet under the crossed thatch, we lived in the greatest abundance; the mash of the foreign birds assembled in this garden provided my father and my tender mother with an inexhaustible mine to feed us, and the prudent sparrow woman had chosen the house of Marabou because of the proximity of the water, which allowed her to find easily at the edge the worms that we urgently need during our young age, especially at the time of growth of our feathers. My nesting companions were two brothers and two sisters, and our parents waited only a few days to show us the use of our wings. Alas! this is easier said than done!

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